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ABSTRACT

The educational system of Macau reflects the influences of several forces: the country's Portuguese colonial past, the looming proximity of China, and the dominance of private schools. This paper examines the political and administrative structure of Macau's educational system, and presents an overview of various features of the system including information on human, physical, and financial resources. Three main problems are identified as affecting the educational system: (1) a lack of an organized structure; (2) limited resources; and (3) the continued teaching of Portuguese, an antiquated language for the population's present-day needs. (DB)

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## MACAU
## EDUCATION IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION : AN OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS

A. ROSA

MEXICO
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MACAU

# EDUCATION IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION: AN OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS

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December 1989

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Political and administrative structure of Macau's education ..... 1
2. Overview of Macau's education ..... 3
   2.1 Non-tertiary education ..... 3
   2.1.1 Institutional setting and systems of education ... 3
   2.1.2 Poly-centred nature of local education and external dependence ..... 7
   2.1.3 The teaching of Portuguese ..... 7
   2.1.4 Constraints on Macau's education development ..... 9
   2.1.5 Human resources ..... 9
   2.1.6 Physical resources ..... 11
   2.1.7 Financial resources ..... 12
   2.2 Tertiary education ..... 14
3. Problems and prospects ..... 16

Notes ..... 22

CHARTS AND TABLES

Chart Macau's Education Department ..... 1
Table Education Department's Staff (Central Services) .. 2
Table Expenditure on education ..... 2
Table 1 Weight of private and public institutions in local education ..... 3
Table 2 Schools and students per institutions 1988/89 .... 4
Table 3 Number of students per teaching institutions ..... 5
Table 4 Systems of education ..... 6
Table 5 Attendance of Portuguese courses ..... 8
Table 6 Teaching staff per system & level of education ... 9
Table 7 Teaching staff academic qualifications ..... 10
Table 8 Teaching staff age structure ..... 11
Table 9 Chinese & English streams places per class ..... 11
Table 10 East Asia University's students per colleges & courses ... 15

## INTRODUCTION

Macau, with its 16-odd square kilometers and an estimated population of around 450 thousand (as at 1988), is the last outpost of what had been for almost five centuries to this date, the vast Portuguese colonial empire, that once stretched to all corners of the world.

Nevertheless, and since its inception under Portuguese rule, Macau has always evolved along models very much its own, which would eventually earn it a specific political statute. As noted by Afonso and Pereira(1), "Macau's unique political statute was shaped in accordance with the historical circumstances which marked four centuries of Sino-Portuguese relations".

This unique status, always marked by some contradiction, some tension but also much indulgence by both Portuguese and Chinese States, would also reflect the non-the-less unique manner in which Portuguese sovereignty has been carried out locally, summarized to perfection following the December 1966 riots* by the then Portuguese Foreign Minister, Franco Nogueira(2): "[...] We have never been truly sovereign over Macau; we have always outlasted out of China's good favour, and authority has always been shared with them; now, yet for some untold mysterious reason, Peking came forward claiming that the share of authority they believed to be theirs had been abused by ourselves, and of such they were giving full notice of. That should therefore be acknowledged and acceded to, accordingly".

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* Violent disturbances that shook Macau at the end of 1966. The Riots, stirred up in the wake of the political developments unfolding in the People's Republic of China at the height of the Cultural Revolution, led to the imposition of martial law in the Territory. The conflict was eventually ended by an accord under which all locally active pro-Taiwan nationalist institutions were expelled from Macau.

Such "acknowledgement" and "concession" would thereafter lead to the implementation of a special form of administration that prompted in our view the evolvement and subsequent consolidation of what is best described as a dualistic society: on the one hand the Portuguese community, with its long-since established political institutions and, on the other the Chinese, with their different way of life and, as such, organized under their own set of rules, only remotely connected to the Administration.

Going further back into the Territory's history, and despite the December 1, 1887 Treaty that shed some light on Macau's political statute by favouring "its increased growth within the Portuguese administrative colonial system"(3), Portuguese sovereignty over Macau was always limited.

It is against this overall social and political background - the hallmark of the Portuguese presence in the Territory, as referred earlier - that the local education system was set up and developed, the main characteristic of which being "the Government's virtual non-intervention in the development of an education policy for Macau"(4).

As a result of the Administration's stance, others took it upon themselves to promote a number of initiatives that would eventually grow into privately-owned education structures flimsily liaising with the Government, whose actions on the sector were almost exclusively tuned to the Portuguese system of education, which currently refers to as little as 5 percent of Macau's student population. To quote Conceição Alves Pinto(5), "[...] since the education needs of the Chinese stream were not met by the Government's own initiative, other institutions moved in to bridge that gap, in detriment to the Government's own interests. The educational scene in Macau has, thus, evolved from various autonomous centres. The result is that now, with the eighties drawing to a close, we are left neither with a centralized nor with a decentralized system of education, but rather with a poly-centred one".

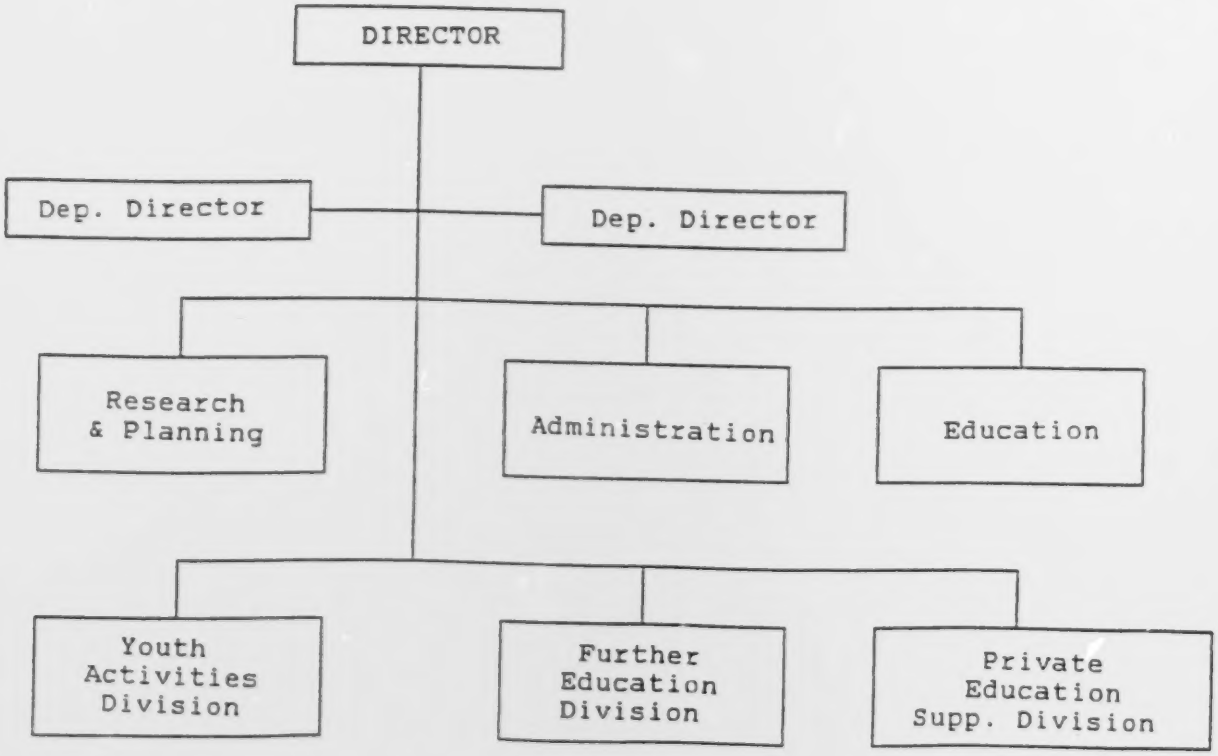
To assess fully the present state of local education as a starting point from which to plan for its future, a comprehensive yet clear understanding of its historical background is an essential prerequisite. We are indeed of the opinion that only a retrospective look will provide suitable answers to all current problems and thus pave the way to the next, much bolder step of planning the future of Macau.

However, as such retrospective exercise would obviously imply a different approach to the one specifically designed for the present address, we shall only try to outline the local education scenario, highlighting main constraints to its smooth development and, finally, submit the broad guidelines governing the changes that are currently under way.

## 1. POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF MACAU'S EDUCATION

The local Education sector is, within the governamental superstructure of Macau, under the scope of action of the Secretary for Education and Public Administration. In administrative terms, the sector is managed and supervised by the Macau Education Department.

The structure of the Macau Education Department, that is still undergoing major reforms launched back in 1987, is shown in the chart bellow which, for the sake of space, has been sub-divided down to Division level only.



Other organizational sub-units under the Education Department which have not been included in the chart, consist of various supporting bodies in functional areas such as diffusion of Portuguese language (the Portuguese Language Diffusion Centre), pedagogic and didactic services (the Pedagogic and Didactic Advisory Centre), professional training (the Professional Training Centre) and youth leisure activities (the Youth Activities Centre).
Also under the Education Department's scope of duties fall both management and supervision of the Territory's government-run schools.

With regard to permanent human resources working at the Department's central services (excluding, therefore, the various support services and schools) current figures stand at 136 units, deployed as shown in the table bellow:

| Professional Groups | % |
|---|---|
| Directorate Level | 2 |
| Departmental Heads | 12 |
| Senior Technical and Technical Staff | 30 |
| Junior Technical Staff | 5 |
| Clerical Staff | 27 |
| General-Duties Staff | 22 |
| Labourers | 2 |
| Total | 100 |

Expenditure on education, with a 1989 budget allocation of some 207 million patacas - or 7.6% of total public expenditure approved under the Territory's Appropriation Bill - has sustained a considerable growth, as shown in the table bellow:

(Million Patacas)

| 1987 (Expenditure) | 1988 (Forecast) | 1989 (Budgeted) 1o) | Growth over | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1988 | Average 1985/87 |
| 131.910 | 178.215 | 207.269 | 16,3% | 24,1 |

Source: Annex to Law no. 27/88/M of December 30
Territory's Authorized Revenue and Expenditure

## 2. OVERVIEW OF MACAU'S EDUCATION

The student population (or 15% of total local residents) is governed by different systems of education under which several types of schools are run, from pre-primary to tertiary level (the latter having been introduced in Macau in 1981).
The average literacy rate among local children and youths aged 3 to 17 stands at 70%, whilst a breakdown per school-age groups results as follows: 3 to 5 year-olds, 90%; ages 6 to 11, 84%; 12 to 14 years of age, 59%, and 23% for 15 to 17 year-old youths.

### 2.1 NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

#### 2.1.1 INSTITUTIONAL-SETTING AND SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

In institutional terms, the structure of Macau's education sector rests overwhelmingly on private institutions. As TABLE 1 clearly shows, 85% of local schools are privately-owned, against only 15% government-run. In terms of student turnover, the former leads by an undisputed majority of 93.5%, compared with the 6.5% posted by the latter.

(Table 1)

| Education | Schools | | Students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q | % | Q | % |
| Public | 12 | 15 | 4.474 | 6,5 |
| Private | 69 | 85 | 63.802 | 93,5 |
| Total | 81 | 100 | 68.276 | 100,00 |

The relative weight of the various organizations overseeing the Territory's private education sector is shown on TABLE 2.

Schools and Students per institutions
1988/89 School Term

(Table 2)

| Institutions running Private Schools | Schools | | Students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | | % | |
| Religious | 56 | | 57 | |
| Roman Catholic | | 47 | | 52 |
| Protestant | | 9 | | 5 |
| Non-religious | 44 | | 43 | |
| Associations | | 24 | | 22 |
| Individuals | | 20 | | 21 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Macau's religious institutions run 56% of local schools which, in turn, post a student turnover of 57%. Within this major group, schools owned by the Roman Catholic Church alone account for 47% of the total, with a student population of 52%, whilst Protestant Churches (Baptist and Lutheran) manage 9% of all existing schools, that cater only to 5% of all Macau students.
The remaining student share of 43% is retained by non-religious concerns (44%), namely associations of economic and social nature which oversee 24% of schools and 22% of students, whilst 20% of all local schools are privately-owned and cater to 21% of our students.

These figures reflect the paramount role played by the Roman Catholic Church and that of the several local Associations which, despite their relatively lesser weight, also show an active involvement in social and educational fields.

Stemming from the fact that education is provided by such variety of institutions, different systems of education are therefore allowed to coexist, each with its own structure and curriculum.

In very general (and even simplistic) terms, one may identify four main systems of education being currently implemented in Macau, depending on the language used as medium of instruction.

TABLE 3 below provides a breakdown of each stream by number of schools and students.

Teaching institutions and number of enrolled students
by type and system of education
1988/89 academic year

(Table 3)

| Systems of Education | Type of Education | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private | | | | Public | | | | Total | | | |
| | Sch. | % | Students | % | Sch. | % | Students | % | Sch. | % | Students | % |
| Chinese | 62 | 100 | 58.700 | 100 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 62 | 100 | 58.700 | 86 |
| Portuguese | 3 | 30 | 951 | 27 | 6 | 70 | 2.549 | 73 | 9 | 100 | 3.500 | 5 |
| English | 4 | 100 | 4.151 | 100 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 4 | 100 | 4.151 | 6 |
| Port.-Chin. | -- | --- | -- | --- | 6 | 100 | 1.925 | 100 | 6 | 100 | 1.925 | 3 |
| Total | 69 | 85 | 63.802 | 93,5 | 12 | 15 | 4.474 | 6,5 | 81 | 100 | 68.276 | 100 |

Note: Portuguese-Chinese education uses Chinese as the medium of instruction, but curriculla include compulsory Portuguese language courses.

The above figures prove that the Chinese stream of education is catered to by private organizations, whilst public schools are left with the running of Portuguese and Sino-Portuguese systems, the latter being also provided by 3 government-funded private schools.

Also worth noting is the relative position of English education which, with its current yield of 4151 students (or 6% of the total), brims over the Portuguese stream (both public and privately-run) that absorbs only 5% of the overall number of students.

Bearing in mind the earlier mentioned precarious government/private sector rapport where education is concerned, the result is that 92% of Macau student population (Chinese and English streams) is pursuing their education - and ultimately, graduation - without automatic official recognition of such degrees, since the courses, curricula and grading methods lack necessary accreditation by local authorities.

We are, therefore, faced with the undisputed fact that no one can in all truth speak of "a system of education" in Macau, but of "different systems", each of them struggling to meet the Territory's needs - but barely succeeding in doing so.

TABLE 4 provides a graphic representation of what was just described.

(Table 4)

| Systems of Education | Levels of Education | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-Primary | | | Primary | | | Secondary | | | |
| | Public | Private | Total | Public | Private | Total | Public | Private | Total | |
| Chinese | -- | 17.149 | 17.149 | -- | 28.533 | 28.533 | -- | 13.018 | 13.018 | 58.700 |
| Portuguese | 248 | 236 | 484 | 965 | 583 | 1.548 | 1.336 | 132 | 1.468 | 3.500 |
| English | -- | 385 | 385 | -- | 1.805 | 1.805 | -- | 1.961 | 1.961 | 4.151 |
| Port.-Chin. | 863 | -- | 863 | 698 | -- | 698 | 364 | -- | 364 | 1.925 |
| Total | 1.111 | 17.770 | 18.881 | 1.663 | 30.921 | 32.584 | 1.700 | 15.111 | 16.811 | 68.276 |

### 2.1.2 POLY-CENTRED NATURE OF LOCAL EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL DEPENDENCE

The poly-centred nature of local education, stemming from the lack of a properly organized and inter-connected system of education regardless of funding sources, gives rise to the strong dependence of Macau upon whichever systems are implemented outside the Territory, be it Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom or even Portugal.

Such dependence bears directly over both curriculum development and its contents. No wonder, thus, that references to Macau's history and status within the international context are practically overlooked in all subjects taught here, as also are other aspects such its geographic situation and the Territory's specific forms of government and social organization. Rather on the contrary, the history or geography of either Hong Kong or the People's Republic of China are taught, depending on the system of education followed.

This is also felt in the Portuguese stream itself, based as it is on the program of studies approved for continental Portugal by the Ministry of Education in Lisbon. Here, as in the two other cases above, curricula were not adapted to Macau's specific characteristics - as it would have been both desirable and possible - neither in terms of the most suited methods of teaching Portuguese as a language, nor where the inclusion of substantive references to local facts and fundamentals were concerned.

### 2.1.3 THE TEACHING OF PORTUGUESE

In the ambit of the activities promoted by the Education Department, the diffusion of Portuguese in Macau is mainly two-folded: in evening courses for young adult/adult students, and daytime courses organized by privately-run Chinese stream schools, for their own regular students.

The evening courses play a fundamental interface role between each relevant stream and the Portuguese system of education, as successful completion of such courses grants accreditation to officially recognized primary (Grade I), pre-secondary (Grade II) and secondary levels (Grade III). It should be added that accreditation of an academic qualification to a grade in the Portuguese system of education is a basic prerequisite for civil service employment.

As for the second method adopted, Portuguese courses provided by Chinese stream schools, although not entailing accreditation to the Portuguese system of education, are considered optional or extra-curricular syllabuses.

Meanwhile, a breakdown of the 1989 school term attendance of the various Portuguese language courses is as follows:

(Table 5)

| Courses | Number of Students | |
|---|---|---|
| Grade I | 1.358 | |
| Grade II | 138 | |
| Grade III | 115 | |
| Sub-Total | | 1.611 |
| Chinese Private Schools | 4.497 | |
| Sub-Total | | 4.497 |
| Total | | 6.108 |

But other government services were also involved in Portuguese language diffusion activities directly or indirectly sponsored by the Education Department, namely the Macau Security Forces, the Administration and Civil Service Department and the Macau Economic Services.

## 2.1.4 CONSTRAINTS ON MACAU'S EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

The previous paras provided a concised, structural-wise look over Macau's non-tertiary education.

However, other equally relevant aspects are also worth referring in some detail, namely the way in which the whole education process is developing, in terms of human, space and financial resources.

## 2.1.5 HUMAN RESOURCES

For an overall total of some 65 000 students who attended the Territory's many different types of schools in the 1987/88 school term, there were about 2 400 teachers distributed as follows by levels and systems of education:

Teaching Staff per system and level of education
(Table 6)

| System of Education | Level of Education | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-Primary | Primary | Secondary | Value | % |
| Chinese | 354 | 922 | 547 | 1.823 | 76 |
| Portuguese | 28 | 60 | 157 | 245 | 10 |
| Port.-Chinese | 44 | 64 | 40 | 148 | 6 |
| English | 20 | 83 | 91 | 194 | 8 |
| Total | 446 | 1.129 | 835 | 2.410 | 100 |

Although significant in terms of volume, it cannot be said that the available teaching staff totally meets the current educational needs, in terms of desired standards of quality. For instance, the student/teacher ratio - especially at the Chinese stream pre-primary level - may achieve considerably high average values of 45 pupils per teacher. However better the situation tends to fare at the the higher levels, it is still far from ideal.

Likewise, Macau's teaching staff academic qualifications cannot be described as rating favourably. This can be seen from TABLE 7 (1987/88 school term), which reveals significant numbers of under-qualified teachers currently on active duty.

Teaching Staff Academic Qualifications
by Levels of Education

(Table 7)

| Systems of Education | Teachers' Academic Qualifications | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Secondary Education | | Primary Ed. Teaching Training | | Prim.Educ. Teach.Train (incompl.) | | Tertiary Education Degree | | Tertiary Education (incompl.) | | Total | |
| | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % |
| Pre-Primary | 123 | 15 | 275 | 48 | 39 | 18 | 9 | 3 | -- | -- | 446 | 18 |
| Primary | 563 | 69 | 301 | 52 | 177 | 82 | 88 | 12 | -- | -- | 1.129 | 47 |
| Secondary | 133 | 16 | 1 | -- | -- | -- | 626 | 85 | 75 | 100 | 835 | 35 |
| TOTAL | 819 | 34 | 577 | 24 | 216 | 9 | 723 | 30 | 75 | 100 | 2.410 | 100 |

From the Total shown above, it stands out that 34% of all local teachers post only secondary education studies, whilst 9% has not even undergone full-term training as primary education teachers, and 3% did not complete tertiary education. Hence, only the remaining 54% hold proper academic degrees as qualified teachers.

However, in addition to the above, the lack of professional qualifications compounds the problem even further, with only 55% of pre-primary, 34% of primary and 27% of secondary teachers holding full professional qualifications.

The age structure of Macau's teaching staff denotes, however, a large youth component. This will undoubtedly encourage the setting-up of in-service training schemes which are likely to become the most efficient way to overcome current poor standards.

Teaching Staff Age Structure

(Table 8)

| Age groups | % |
|---|---|
| <20 | 1 |
| 20 to 39 | 62 |
| 40 to 49 | 21 |
| >50 | 15 |

As can be seen from TABLE 8 above, 84% of the Territory's teachers is under 50 years of age, and within that vast majority, 62% belong to the age bracket of 20 to 39.

## 2.1.6 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Macau faces considerable quantity and quality school space shortages; hence, overcrowded conditions are common to all classrooms and grades, particularly in privately-owned schools catering to Chinese and English streams, where the situation has reached critical levels.

Chinese and English Streams
Places per Class
(1987/88 School Term)

(Table 9)

| Levels of Education | Average Student Places per Class | | | | | | | | Total no. of Classes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ≤ 40 | | 41 a 50 | | 51 a 60 | | > 60 | | | |
| | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % |
| Pre-Primary | 56 | 17 | 137 | 41 | 98 | 30 | 41 | 12 | 332 | 100 |
| Primary | 110 | 18 | 221 | 37 | 196 | 32 | 77 | 13 | 604 | 100 |
| Secondary | 20 | 7 | 157 | 55 | 98 | 35 | 9 | 3 | 284 | 100 |
| TOTAL | 186 | 15 | 515 | 42 | 392 | 32 | 127 | 11 | 1.220 | 100 |

It is clear from these numbers that no proper or efficient student-oriented teaching method, focusing on his or her specific learning requirements, can ever be implemented, in that it is humanly impossible for teachers to monitor the different levels of knowledge acquired by so many students, let alone establishing a fundamental teacher-student interaction.

Moreover, the lack of school space to meet a growing demand, prompts an annual race to an already limited number of available places at the existing institutions. As a result, more and more stringent selection methods are implemented each year.

In these circumstances, the whole process of learning - which should evolve smoothly and efficiently - is increasingly impaired, to the point of becoming an established battle ground for perennial adversaries, fuelling individualistic sentiments and the notion that only the fittest survive.

Schools become, therefore, breading fields for differences that had never been known before, rather than contributing to overcome structural imbalances or promoting different learning opportunities for different students.

### 2.1.7 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The private sector's overwhelming weight in the Territory's education and the historical fact that it has been allowed to develop without intervention from the Government, resulted in the great many part of Macau's families ending up paying their children's education in full.

Only after approval of Law No. 11/77/M of October 22, 1977, by the local Legislative Assembly did the Government begin to see the role of Macau's private schools at a different light.

Based on the new legal guidelines, several modalities of financial assistance were then set out by Government's Decision no. 32/78/M. The amounts of such subsidies would be partially reviewed by the Administration in 1983 and finally, in 1985, teachers became eligible to perceive direct allowances by enactment of Government Order no. 199/85 of September 14.

These forms of financial assistance granted to both teaching institutions (to fund running costs, renovation works and equipment) and their teaching staff (as extra-pay allowance), were obviously instrumental in sustaining education costs and, naturally, school fees.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of pupils - if not all of them - attending Macau's private schools still have to pay fees, regardless of grade and level.

In an attempt to alleviate the costs borne by local families, the Government set up a scholarship scheme to fund 10% of all primary and secondary education students, with greater needs.

As a first step towards the phased implementation of free primary schooling, a subsidy of 500 patacas (around US$64) was introduced in the academic year of 1988/89, for all primary students. This allowance covers some 40% of the average fees charged by local schools.

If these measures helped to improve significantly the situation, they are nevertheless not enough to solve it. It suffices to say that Macau has yet to institute free schooling at any of the existing levels of education. This is, in our view, totally out of line with a strategy aimed at providing equal opportunities and the universal right to education for all, regardless of their economic resources.

## 2.2 TERTIARY EDUCATION

Despite the establishment as far back as the sixteenth century of the first university in Macau - and also the first European-style one in all Asia - a tertiary education tradition would not consolidate in the Territory throughout the centuries.

Only in 1979 did the Government sign an agreement with a private consortium, that built and put together what became, in 1981, the University of East Asia. Only from then on may one speak of tertiary education's firmer steps in Macau.

The circumstances of its creation, however, rather than making it an institution for Macau, laid the ground for its development as a foreign university, adopting English as the medium of instruction and fully governed under the Anglo-American system of education.

In 1985, the University's concessionary agreement is reviewed and a new phase in the institution's life begins, with the Territory's Administration intent on having a say in the running of its affairs, through the appointment of a Government's Delegate and the creation of a Centre of Portuguese Studies.
The next final step towards a Macau-oriented university came in February 1988, when the institution was bought from its original owners by the Macau Foundation, whose Curator is the Governor of Macau himself.

From then on a series of administrative and operational reforms were introduced, paving the way for the recently set-up Portuguese stream Law and Public Administration degree and the Public Administration Course.

From 1987 on, Chinese stream Teachers Training courses, sponsored by the Macau Education Department, were also launched.

TABLE 10 below outlines the most relevant details on the University of East Asia with regard to the academic year of 1988/89.

(Table 10)

| Colleges-Courses | Students | | | | | | Profs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Macau | | Others | | Total | | |
| | Q | % | Q | % | Q | % | |
| University College | 217 | 54 | 185 | 46 | 402 | 100 | |
| Polytechnic | 114 | 44 | 144 | 56 | 258 | 100 | 132 |
| Teachers Training | 106 | 100 | --- | -- | 106 | 100 | |
| Pre-University College | 401 | 66 | 206 | 34 | 607 | 100 | |
| Law and Public Administration Course | 89 | 100 | --- | -- | 89 | 100 | 12 |
| Degree in Public Administration | 40 | 100 | --- | -- | 40 | 100 | a) |
| Total | 967 | 64 | 535 | 36 | 1.502 | 100 | 144 |

a) Not permanent, due to curriculum organization

However, the University's full schedule of activities is not limited to these courses, and many other initiatives are being prepared or already under way.
Among the latter, and in conjunction with both public and private bodies, the UEA has been organizing and implementing a series of refresher courses for local staff employed in the Territory's industries and services, namely in Banking, Data Processing and Statistical areas.

Also under study is the University's participation in senior staff training for Macau's Security Forces, as well as full nurse training with the creation of a Bachelors degree in Nursing.

Both the Engineering Degree and the setting-up of the Higher School of Education are nearing their final stages. On the other hand, the preliminary studies for new graduate courses in Tourism and Music, as well as for post-graduation in Business Management and other areas, are progressing well.

Finally, several Summer courses will also be launched to enable foreign students to get better acquainted with Macau's main social, political and cultural characteristics, and to provide local students an alternative way of spending part of their holiday period by furthering their knowledge.

## 3. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Three main problem areas may be identified as affecting the local education sector:

- The first one, is the total lack of an organized and systematized structure, in the absence of which several systems of education - rather than a single encompassing one - are allowed to coexist and develop separately. Because of this, they are not only highly dependent on other systems implemented abroad, but also only thinly attached to Macau's own social and cultural reality - a not very encouraging scenario compounded by the further lack of a Macau-oriented university to offset these imbalances.

- The second one lies on the precarious resources on which the Territory's education is running - scarce human and space resources on the one hand and, on the other, the considerably great pressure put on the families financial resources as a result of those two above. These precarious resources prompt fierce selectivity, the downgrading of teaching standards and a significant number of school drop-outs, namely at the final years of secondary education.

- The third main problem area is directly linked to the teaching of Portuguese and the language's neglectable weight in overall terms, since the vast majority of Macau's student population takes up the Chinese system of education.

To top these, and since no official guidance or monitoring of the process of education - particularly where approval of curricula and course of studies ministered by the most significant part of the Territory's schools are concerned - a paradoxical situation arises and its consequences on Macau's social and administrative life are obvious. It concerns the lack of official recognition and accreditation of academic qualifications, and may be curtly put as below:

(a) Students who attended Macau's Chinese schools - the overwhelming majority, as seen earlier (TABLE 3 refers) - having been successful in completing their primary or secondary education, are not eligible to apply for civil service jobs as their degrees or diplomas are not officially recognized and, therefore, not accredited.

Should they wish to join the Government ranks, their sole alternative is to pursue further studies, specifically by enrolling in Portuguese language and culture courses which, upon successful completion, will grant them the necessary accreditation to a relevant degree in the Portuguese system of education.

(b) Students who are compelled to pursue their tertiary education abroad (since such studies are not available to them locally), return to Macau with a university degree or diploma which, however, are not officially recognized by the Government - unless such degree or diploma is recognized by a Portuguese university, and the necessary accreditation therefore granted.

Or, putting the above instances in simpler terms: the community invests extensively on education and training of its young people, who may eventually graduate or obtain a diploma; however, they are not given the opportunity to "repay" such investment by putting their better skills to the community and Government's service, because the latter does not validate their foreign degrees.

This is indeed a problem with extensive and serious implications which, in the period of transition we are now undergoing, may well be considered the most crucial issue facing the Territory in these times of change.

We do firmly believe that the answers arrived at to overcome the many challenges of our education sector, will also lead us to a workable policy which, in the interests of both the Portuguese and Chinese States, may ensure a peaceful, stable and smooth changeover of sovereignty.

Refusing to acknowledge these problems, or just ignoring them, would certainly be doing a serious disservice to Macau and its future. On the other hand, if nothing - or next to nothing - is done in the precious little time left to the Portuguese Administration of Macau, more than a show of narrow-mindness, would certainly be a deliberate deed against the best interests and needs of the population, and against those of the Portuguese and Chinese nations.

Ultimately, it would amount to nothing shorter of surrender of our historical responsibilities which, regardless of our posture, were furthermore enshrined in the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration.

In view of the present state of affairs in the local education sector; in view of the Government's impending responsibilities, particularly in the period of transition; and bearing in mind the spirit and the letter of the "Joint Declaration of the Governments of the Republic of Portugal and of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Macau", where it is stated that:-

> "The Macau Special Administrative Region shall on its own decide policies in the fields of culture, education, science and technology, such as policies regarding the languages of instruction (including Portuguese) and the system of academic qualifications and the recognition of academic degrees..."(6).

the Government of Macau has established the following main policy goals:

"- Setting out the infrastructures for a single, articulate system of education for Macau, governed by such rules and regulations as to be enacted under a future Framework Law which, without impairing free teaching rights and the specific characteristics of each different existing system, and further bearing in mind the autonomy of local teaching institutions, shall authorize and promote official recognition of courses taught [in the Territory], and the phased implementation of a six-year period of compulsory universal free schooling.

- Review of the current Portuguese language diffusion sub-system, with the overall redefinition of educational goals, methods and programs, so as to bring them in line with the Territory of Macau's specific needs and expectations, and to serve fully a global policy of widespread bilingualism".

Once these goals were set out, an Education Review Programme was initiated, principally aimed at creating a totally dedicated system of education in Macau, not only taylor-made to the Territory's own needs but also dynamic, so as to boost social development, and flexible, to accommodate and support an increased level of autonomy, both now and in the future, as Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

The new education system, although basically organized upon some features of its own - the hallmark of its identity - will nevertheless reconcile within itself the present systems' main characteristics and requirements.

Meanwhile, some measures have already been taken in the ambit of the Review Programme, which is in force since 1988.

Among them, the following are worth highlighting:

- Enactment of legislation to enable the accreditation of academic qualifications earned both in Macau and abroad, and encompassing all education levels and grades regardless of language used as medium of instruction.

- Initiation of the necessary actions aiming at the implementation of free schooling for the first six years of primary education. The new system is to be fully operational by the 1991/92 academic year.

- Intensification of a series of planned actions in support of the University of East Asia to step up the creation of new academic degrees to meet both the local demand and that arising out of the institution's own process of reform.

- Signing of a Cooperation Agreement with Fundação Oriente on specific areas of education, to ensure a continuing effort towards diffusion of Portuguese within a general frame more in line with the challenges of the transitional period.

- The recent appointment of the Education Reform Committee, formed by Chinese and Portuguese members, whose task is to coordinate the whole process of Education Reform, under the direct supervision of the Under-Secretary for Education and Public Administration.

Following the implementation of these measures and as a result of some of them, other actions are scheduled to be fully operational by the end of the current year, among which the following ones are particularly relevant:

- Approval of the Mainframe Law on Macau's Education System, to provide the necessary backbone and articulation structures;

- Approval and enactment of the Higher Education Act, to be merged at a later stage with the Mainframe Law on Macau's Education System;

- In the ambit of a phased free schooling scheme, promotion of individual contract signing aimed at achieving more efficient funding mechanisms specially designed for primary education;

- Outlining of a school building program, either directly funded by the Government, or indirectly sponsored through the concession of facilities and grants to private institutions, with a view to overcome current space shortages;

- Creation of an Open College of Education in the ambit of the University of East Asia, to provide training to larger numbers of teaching staff to cope with an increasing demand prompted by the expanding student population, as well as in-service training for under-qualified teachers.

NOTES

(1) Afonso, Rui e Pereira, F.G., "The Political Status and Government Institutions of Macau", in Hong Kong Law Journal, Vol. 16, Part I, Hong Kong, 1986, p.28

(2) Nogueira, Franco, "Confessions of a Politician (Diary: 1960 - 1968)", Editora Civilização Publishers, Oporto, 1987, p.208)

(3) Afonso, Rui e Pereira, F.G., "The Constitution and Legal System", in R.D. Kremer (Publ.) "Macau, City of Commerce and Culture, UEA Press, Hong Kong, 1987, p.185

(4) Rosa, Alexandre, "Education in Macau - Considerations", in "Administration", Macau, SAFP, 1988, 1987, p.13

(5) Pinto, Conceição Alves, "Education in Macau: A Systemic Approach", SAEC, 1987, p.20

(6) "Joint Declaration of the Governments of the Republic of Portugal and of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Macau", Article VII, p.8